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UNCLAS AUCKLAND 000004

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR ANNE GRIMES TO AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

REF: STATE 012498

1. AMCONGEN Auckland welcomes EAP/PD Country Co-ordinator Anne Grimes to Auckland, 02-03 March 2006. The purpose of the visit is to conduct public diplomacy consultations.

2. Post understands Embassy Wellington has reserved accommodation at the Duxton Hotel in Auckland.

3. Point of contact at Consulate General Auckland is PAS Assistant, Philip McKenna. Contact details are as follows:
Office Tel: 64-9-303 2724 ext.2843
Cell Tel: 027-434 3140
Fax: 64-9-366 0870
E-mail: MckennaPA@state.gov

4. Visitors should use local taxi service, which is generally safe, reliable and frequent. Taxi fare from the airport to downtown Auckland hotels is approximately NZD60-65. A commercial shuttle service is also offered at the airport.

5. Travelers can exchange currency at the airport upon arrival and ATM machines are readily available throughout New Zealand.

6. Biosecurity Fines:
The government of New Zealand instituted fines for non-declared biosecurity hazards on travelers entering New Zealand with undeclared plant, animal or food material. Travelers found carrying these undeclared items will be immediately fined NZ\$200 (~US\$135). Biosecurity is a serious issue in New Zealand and fines will be administered immediately and without warnings.

7. Security Information:
a. The U.S. Mission in New Zealand currently rates the threat from transnational and indigenous terrorism as low. There are no terrorist groups or support groups believed to be operating in New Zealand at this time. In light of the worldwide security alert all visitors should heighten their security awareness and report any unusual incidents to the regional security office.

b. Anonymous telephonic threats and obscure threat mail have occasionally targeted U.S. diplomatic missions in New Zealand. In response to U.S. policies and actions, various groups in New Zealand have demonstrated occasionally at the Embassy in Wellington and at the Consulate in Auckland. These demonstrations are usually small and are peacefully conducted. During these demonstrations, the host country police and protective services normally provide adequate protection to the Embassy and Consulate.

c. New Zealand is considered a medium threat crime environment. As such, Wellington and Auckland have experienced an increase in violent and petty crimes, and it is usually non-confrontational in nature. However, home invasion, robberies and assaults, once very rare, are becoming more frequent. Burglaries and thefts occur countrywide but primarily in the large cities of Auckland and Wellington, and visitors should be aware that street crime, such as scams and pickpockets is a daily occurrence in these cities. Common sense precautions should be taken, especially at night, to avoid becoming a target of opportunity.

d. All forms of public transportation are generally safe at all times of the day; however, at night visitors should use common sense precautions so as to not become a target of opportunity.

LOPEZ